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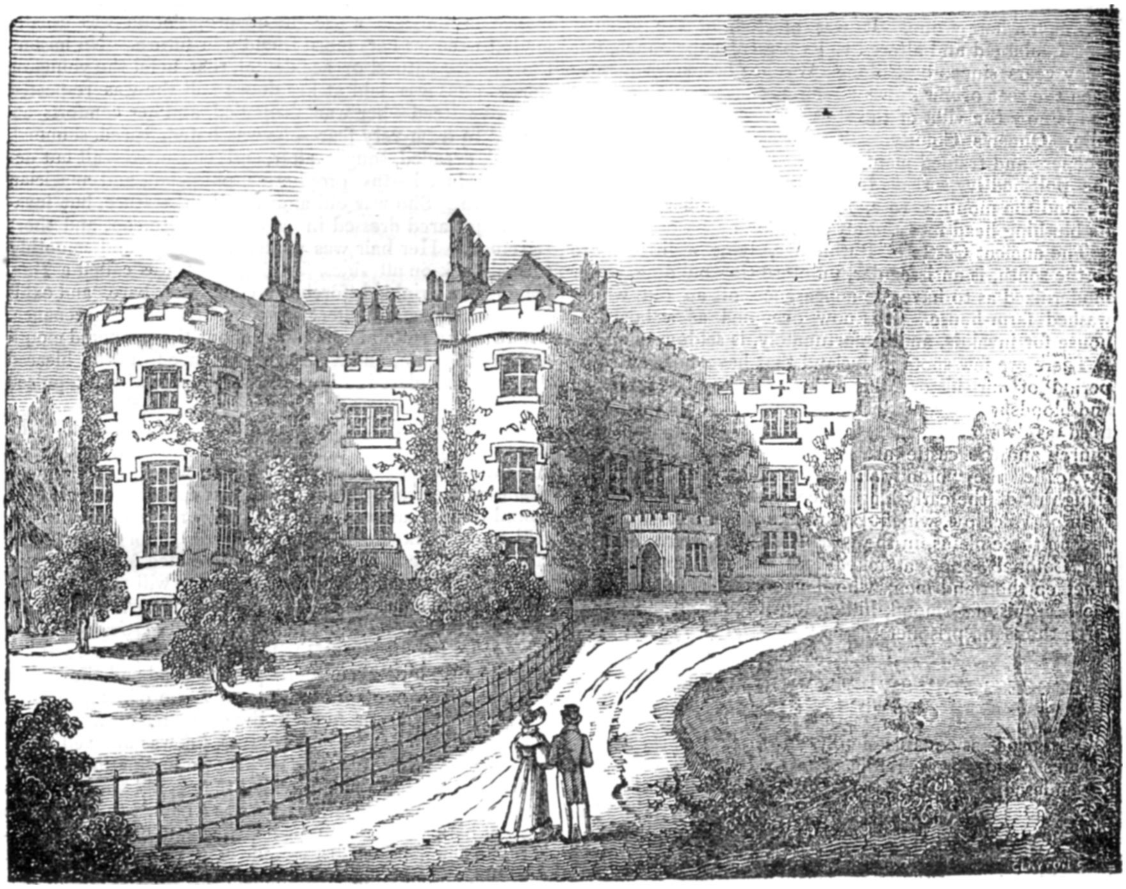

RATHMINES CASTLE.

It is universally acknowledged that there are few cities can boast of such environs as the metropolis of Ireland. The natural features are of the most varied and agreeable description; for while to the north the level plains of Fingal stretch luxuriantly forth, seeming to bask in the invigorating beams of the sun, or opening their bosoms to receive the genial shower, and teem with fertility; to the south the landscape, first rising in gentle undulations, gradually swells into hills, and at length bursts forth into the bleak and heathery mountain; while eastward is the bay—"the beautiful bay"—with all its ever-changing, never-ending, never-tiring, succession of enchanting scenery.

Still the beauties of nature are not the only charms of the environs of Dublin. Man, proud man, lord of the creation, has also done his part; and, taking advantage of every circumstance favourable to his views, has gradually increased his dominion and reared his habitation—thus giving life to inanition, and ornamenting the entire scene with splendid tokens of his taste, industry, and perseverance.

A great portion of the improvements that are now perceptible, are the growth of the last few years; nor are they confined to the country—even the city has, within a very short period, advanced far beyond its former bounds, and nearly doubled its circumference. Several places known to our fathers, and even by ourselves in early life, as villages, at a distance from the metropolis, are now swallowed up in the vortex of improvement, and become part and parcel of the mighty whole; and if the magnitude and splendour of a capital may be taken as an evidence of the prosperity of a kingdom, we may say, in defiance of every other proof or assertion to the contrary, that the condition of Ireland, as a nation, is improving.

On the south side this appearance of improvement is most striking; here the eye is fatigued with the endless succession of new buildings; and although "all is not gold that glitters," and we are compelled to acknowledge, from symptoms of premature decay, or tokens of overstrained ability, that many of the edifices in this direction are rather the result of building speculations than the effects of a legitimate desire of improvement; yet we find, in the almost interminable maze, many to admire, and not a few tokens of genuine taste.

Scarcely a dozen years since Rathmines was only known as an obscure village, a mile and a half from Dublin; it is now a beautiful suburb, commencing at Portobello Bridge, and extending, in a continuous line of handsome boxes and splendid villas, nearly two miles in a direct line. It is divided into upper and lower, the old village, where the road branches to Rathfarnham, forming the dividing point. And here, along this line, may be discerned every description of fancy edifice, from the castellated mansion or Italian villa, to the modest cottage ornée.

At the upper end of Rathmines stands, on the left, a white house, with an observatory on the roof, and immediately beyond may be perceived a length of blank wall, overhung by venerable trees, and, at its nearest extremity, entered by a dingy gate and wicket; within that wall, completely secluded from observation, and (except that the hum of the city occasionally reaches it,) as perfectly silent and retired as if in a wilderness, stands the subject of our sketch, Rathmines Castle. It presents a very antiquated appearance: round Norman towers, connected by curtain walls, embattled parapets, mullioned windows, with label and hood mouldings, oriells, and machicolations, all speak of other days; but it is only an imitation, although a happy one. It was erected, or the original house enlarged and altered to its present appearance, not many years since, by Colonel Wynne; has subsequently been the seat of Sir Jonas Green, the late City Recorder, and is now the villa of the Rev. Thomas Kelly, of Kellyville, Queen's County. The walls are covered with creepers and trained plants, both foreign and domestic; the polished ivy spreads luxuriantly over a great part of it; and the monthly rose, in bleak December, intrudes its blushing head into the attic windows.

The ancient Castle of Rathmines, lying a little more to the south, is an irregular, uninteresting building, so far modernized as to have the appearance of an old white-washed farm-house. It is now occupied as a boarding house for invalids, and, unfortunately, is seldom empty.

There are few spots in Ireland that have not, at some period of our history, been the theatres of contention and bloodshed; even Rathmines, placid, quiet, and retired as it now appears, has had its share—both the church and the castle are erected on what are, to this day, called the "bloody fields," for here occurred that slaughter of the early English colonists of Dublin by the Irish of Wicklow, which gave name to Black Monday; and on these plains, in the year 1649, the stern republican, Colonel Jones, attacked and defeated an army of nineteen thousand men, who lay encamped here under the Marquis of Ormond, killing four thousand, and taking three thousand prisoners. R. A.

PROCESS FOR SWEETENING WATER AND OTHER LIQUIDS.

This process consists simply in forcing a stream or streams of air through foul or tainted water, intended to be rendered sweet, and is particularly applicable to sweetening water on board ships, which has become tainted in water casks. The means employed are either pumps or bellows—the air must be forced so as to pass to the bottom of the cask, and the effect will be, that the offensive gas, held in solution in the water, and which on board ship is generally *hydrogen*, will be expelled from the water, after which the water must be left at rest for the impurities to subside.

THE FAIRY WOMAN OF BALRATH.

A TALE FOUNDED ON FACT.

> The midnight spell—the moonlight charm—
> These were her weapons, good and ill.

It is truly lamentable to behold what a firm footing old superstitions and absurd customs have obtained in the minds of our Irish peasantry. There is not an ill which happens to them but is ascribed to some evil influence in which invisible or mystical agents are concerned. Not an accident occurs either to their persons or properties but has for its director some spiteful fairy or malignant witch, and instead of applying the proper remedies to an injury or a disease, they have recourse to counter charms and incantations to circumvent the spells of their magical or invisible enemy. In such cases, the general result, as may be expected, will be loss and misery, and as the worst passions of human nature are enlisted in support of their wicked and superstitious practices, more desperate consequences often follow. Every district has its witch, fairy-man, fortune-teller, or prophet, and in parts every village is supplied with its own *wise man*, or *knowing woman*, and in these ignorant, though cunning wretches, the most implicit faith is placed by the misguided and deluded people.

I remember one old beldame who was the terror of my boyhood, and who possessed the most horrible character that ever fell to the lot of human being to be burdened with. It was said that when she was young she caused the death of a false lover by some horrible process. She was accused of depriving several farmers of their butter, and of causing their cows to run dry. The poor man's pigs could not be troubled with the measles or his children with the mumps, but Madge Moran was the author of the affliction. His heifers could not be seized with the black leg, or his wife with the weed, but "the ugly ould witch, bad scran to her," was always venting her spite and malice on him, and a present of propitiation was usually made to render her more friendly in future. No misfortune, either natural or accidental, that befel the young or the old; but was laid at her door; still she was respected from her dread—her wants supplied, and her comforts attended to from very fear—she was hated, feared, shunned, obeyed, dreaded, sought after, and consulted—all but despised or loved—the prophetess, physician, and magician of Balrath. She was old and small in stature, but invariably appeared dressed in a clean white cap, and short red cloak. Her hair was white, carefully and smoothly turned back on all sides, forming what was called a *Tate*,* leaving the wrinkled forehead completely bare, and exhibiting with singular effect her thin shrivelled countenance. There was a spiteful expression about the puckered mouth and peaked chin, and a designing glance from the bleared eye, well calculated to impress the ignorant with a repulsed feeling.

Our village of Balrath was a sweet quiet spot. The road sweeping round the base of a wooded hill, and plunging into the gorge of a tangled glen, was lost in the deep shade of the trees, among which you could distinguish the sound of a stream as it struggled to force its way to the still smooth lake below. On a barren moory spot beside the lake, at the skirts of the village, resided Madge Moran.

Even in a secluded rural village, you will meet with almost all the characters, and in all their variety of shade and mingling, to be found in the wide and crowded city.—The rake, the profligate, the fool, the knave, the worthless and the abandoned, and perhaps the good and the honest man. Terence Magrath, the only son of a respectable farmer, reserved for himself the character of the rake.—The favourite of indulgent parents, he was allowed at an early age to follow the bent of his own inclinations. Supplied with the little means which they could afford for his amusement or gratification, he was enabled to pursue the path of his passions without interruption or hindrance.—A young man allowed to run the round of folly and extravagance, taking counsel alone for his high coloured fancies and passions, is a melancholy object. A young tree may be permitted to spread its branches high and wide in green and wild luxuriance, but it must undergo the cultivating hand of the pruner to make it bear beautiful blossoms, or yield a profitable return of wholesome fruit.—Terence was a laughing, careless, good-natured, frolicsome young fellow; on Sundays and holydays he was to be seen at the dance in the village, the blythest of the thoughtless throng. He was seldom guilty of a malicious or ill-natured wickedness, but ready to run first into any thoughtless freak, and consulting but his own pleasure and amusement for the moment. He was early led into riot and dissipation, and still though a "devil may care," he was generally beloved. He was also a special favourite with the fair—the most lively and agreeable companion, the best dancer, and the handsomest young man within miles, and then so off-handed, liberal, and pleasant!

Terence Magrath could not be supposed to exist without being in love. *Love is the life, and inmost soul of an* Irishman; his day-dream and his bliss, his happiness and perfection. Terence therefore selected for his heart's idol the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, who though not so wealthy in the estimation of his neighbours as the parents of Terence, was yet comfortable and independent. She was very young, innocent and engaging; and it would be paying a bad compliment to the taste of Terence if I could not say that she was handsome. She was lively, and Terence loved her deeply and sincerely; and in return Alice Moore loved him tenderly and truly, and with all the enthusiastic devotedness of woman's young love. At first the parents of Terence did not notice their son's attentions to the fair Alice, thinking it but the casual gallantry usual among young people. As time passed, however, it